

Beth Tephila Messianic Jewish Congregation (Under same management for over 5780 years)

SHABBAT SERVICE

Lolo Community "Synagogue"

February 21st – 10:30 AM

12:30 PM Oneg Shabbat & Interactive Torah Study

"Blessed are those whose way of life is blameless; who live by the Torah of Adonai.

Blessed are those who observe His instruction; who seek Him with all their heart." Psalm 119



וְאֵלֶּה הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר תָּשִׂים לִפְנֵיהֶם:

v' eleh ha mishpatim asher tasim lif' neihem.

And these are the **ordinances** (laws, judgments) that you will put before them.

כִּי תִקְנֶה עֶבֶד עִבְרִי שֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים יַעֲבֹד וּבַשְּׁבִיעִת יֵצֵא לְחֹפְשֵׁי חִנָּם:

Ki tikneh eved ivri shesh shanim ya'avod uvashvi'it yetse lachofshi chinam.

If you buy a Hebrew slave, six years he will work and on the seventh (he will) go out to freedom without paying.

God's Constitution

The third month after leaving Egypt, the torah portion for this week finds God's people still camped on the flat plain in front of Mt. Sinai. God had presented them with a covenant relationship. If the people would hear God's voice and obey the stipulations of God's covenantal law, then the people would become God's own possession, a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation. The people answered, "All that the Lord has spoken, we will do!" (**Ex.19:5-8**) God dramatically descended onto Mt. Sinai with fire, thunder, smoke, deafening noise, and even the ground quaked underneath them. The culmination of this event was the presentation to the people of God's ten words, the ten commandments. The ten commandments could be said to be God's Constitution for His people from which all the rest of God's laws found in the Torah would spring.

As slaves for over 400 years, the people had been ruled under Egyptian law capriciously administered. Now God's people had freely chosen to obey God's laws as part of a covenantal relationship they would have with Him. There will be a total of **613 mitzvot** (commandments, laws) written in the Torah, **all of which must be obeyed**. As freemen, God's people needed a framework of ethical and moral rules to make their lives a witness of God's greatness to all pagan nations. One of the purposes of God's covenantal relationship with His people was to show to the world that His people lived distinctive, ethical, and moral lives. One might say that **God's laws, setting His people apart from the rest of the world, was the first gospel witness**. Like Ruth ("Your people shall be my people and your God my God"....**Ruth 1:16**), other pagan people would see the value of joining themselves to God's people.

God's Bill of Rights

If the ten commandments are considered God's Constitution, then the next 53 mitzvot (commandments) that follow in this Torah portion could be considered God's Bill of Rights. Besides amplification of laws of utility, such as theft and murder, we also find testimonial laws and some seemingly supra-rational laws. Testimonial laws commemorate an event (ex. Passover, keeping the Sabbath). Supra-rational laws appear to have no rational purpose but are simply decrees from God for His purposes (**Ex.23:19** "You are not to boil a kid in the milk of its mother). While most of God's laws of utility are quite logical to us ("You shall not murder."), other laws are not apparently logical to us at all. However, while God did create the human mind to be logical, wouldn't it be ridiculous for us to mandate that all of God's laws must fit into our logical mindset? What we must accept is that all of God's laws are not only logical but also profitable for us simply because they are mandated by God. **We must by faith choose to obey God's laws**, as they are written and revealed to us by the **Ruach HaKodesh** (Holy Spirit). "The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul. The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The Fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever. The judgments of the Lord are true. They are righteous altogether." (**Psalms 19:7-9**).

Serving our Master

The first set of laws relate to masters and slaves. One might think that after 400 years of slavery, God's people would not again want to subject themselves to slavery. However, this provision was for the benefit of a person, who was in debt or owed restitution (22:3) beyond his means to repay or whose family might be starving. Yeshua makes mention of such an incident in **Matt.18:23-25** and makes no mention that this practice is wrong. The provision was that the person or family could become the property of the "master" and work for him for six years to repay the debt. After six years, the person's debt would be paid off, and he would be free of any further requirement. If he married someone while in servitude, he might want to remain with his family, in the service of the master. In the same context, the starving family might enjoy better conditions in this relationship and decide to continue the relationship. A willing servant was called a "bond-slave." He was bound inextricably to the master and would enjoy the fruits he would produce as he accomplished the will of his master. Paul (**Rom.1:1, Titus1:1**, along with Timothy, **Phil.1:1**), Peter (2 **Peter1:1**), and James (**Jas.1:1**) used this analogy, calling themselves "bond-servants" of Messiah, being inextricably bound to Him as their "Master" and enjoying the spiritual fruits of their labors in His service. Although **today** the idea of slavery may seem repugnant, Romans 6:16,19 tells us that **we are all slaves of the things we obey**, "...either of sin, resulting in death, or of obedience (to God), resulting in righteousness (being in good-standing before God). We are either slaves to impurity, resulting in lawlessness or slaves of righteousness, resulting in sanctification (becoming more like Messiah). **When we realize all our Master has done for us, we willingly become His bond-servants, submitting our bodies into His service.** The price of our freedom from the slavery of sin in our lives has been paid by the blood sacrifice of Messiah, who willingly laid down His life to purchase our freedom to choose Him as our Master.

Under the Mosaic Law, a family might sell their daughter into the house of the master, so that she might marry either the master or his son, thereby lifting herself to the status of wife or concubine. She would either have the rights of a wife to food, clothing, and having children (vs.10-11), or she would be given her freedom. One should note that under the newer covenant, the "law of Messiah," one may only have one wife (**I Cor.7:2**).

Capital Punishment

In verses 12-17, we see that God demands the death penalty for breaking some of His commandments. Committing murder (Commandment #6) is punishable by death. We may note that Yeshua commanded Peter to "put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword

shall perish by the sword" (**Matt.26:52**). In **Matt.5:21**, Yeshua said, "Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court." Striking one's father or mother to draw blood (Commandment #5) is punishable by death. Even withholding money from parents on the pretext of giving it to the Temple was condemned by Yeshua in **Mark 7:11-13**. Kidnapping - stealing another person - (Commandment #8) is punishable by death. Yet the Mosaic Law also allows for the unpremeditated accident, resulting in death. The perpetrator could flee to one of six cities of refuge in the land (**Num.35:11**) and remain protected there.

Personal Injury

Verses 18-27 have to do with personal injury disputes, where the penalty could be punishment, restitution, payment of a fine, or freedom in the case of a slave. In cases of personal injury, the remedy includes the "Law of retribution" or "Lex Talionis," the basis of which is that "the punishment must fit the crime." The idea was to prevent excessive punishment or retaliation. We must also remember that in response to the law of retribution Yeshua said, ..."do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also" (**Matt.5:39**).

Verses 28-36 involve examples of disputes involving negligence, the punishment for which is greater if habitual negligence was shown. An interesting item is found in verse 32, where the price paid to the owner of a slain slave was thirty shekels of silver. Moses wrote this book over 1400 years before Judas Iscariot was paid thirty shekels of silver to betray Yeshua (**Matt. 26:15**)....the price of a dead slave. Imagine, 1400 years without inflation!

Theft, Property Damage, Dishonesty, Immorality

Chapter 22 begins with laws concerning thievery, breaking the 8th commandment. This would be a common crime and therefore the punishment for theft should be sufficient to discourage it. If the thief resells an animal he has stolen, his restitution is 4 or 5 times the amount received for what he sold. If the thief still has the animals, his restitution is twice what he stole. If he is caught in the act of stealing, an owner may use lethal force to stop him. Implicit here is the understanding that the thief might kill the owner to cover his crime. If the thief is caught sometime later, after already committing the crime, he may be punished but not killed in the recovery of the stolen animals. However, if the thief is not able to pay the restitution, then he can be sold into slavery to work off the restitution. Restitution is also the punishment for negligence resulting in property damage to a neighbor's field or crops or for dishonesty, where the property of someone has been misappropriated by another. The restitution for immorality, a man seducing a virgin, who is not engaged, is quite high....50 shekels of silver. Even if the father permits the perpetrator to marry his daughter, the husband cannot divorce her all her life (**Deuteronomy 22:28-29**).

Occult practices & the affliction of God's People

Verses 18 - 24 state circumstances requiring capital punishment for crimes that God hates: sorcery; sacrifices to other gods; taking advantage of orphans or widows. Verses 25-27 did not allow God's people to take advantage of their brothers. In verse 28, cursing God, violates the third commandment. Even cursing a ruler (whom God allowed to rule) is not permitted. Paul apologizes for unintentionally doing so in **Acts. 23:3-5**.

First Fruits Offering

Remembering God's commands to the people in **Exodus 13:1,12**, the people, grateful for God's deliverance, were to dedicate to God the first-fruits of men, animals, and harvest; all to be used in God's ministry. The people were not to delay in bringing their offerings to God but should give joyfully.

False Witness, False Justice

In Chapter 23, God's people were told not to bear false witness (the 9th commandment) or conspire with others to do so. Nor are we allowed to pervert justice. Instead one should be totally impartial, neither favoring nor disfavoring the poor. We should not make a false charge or take a bribe (vs.7-8). **Romans 1:18** tells us that God's wrath is against those who suppress the truth.

Love your Neighbor as Yourself



Verses 4 & 5 tell of a circumstance where a person had opportunity to prevent the misfortune of his enemy. Should he do so? Yes. "If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying helpless under its load, you shall refrain from leaving it to him, you shall surely release it with him," **Romans 12:20-21** tells us to help our enemies and not to be overcome with evil, but to overcome evil with good. Lastly, we are told not to oppress a foreigner because we should remember that we, too, were once foreigners in Egypt.

Sabbath & Pilgrimage Festivals

Verses 10 - 19 give laws related to the Sabbath and the three pilgrimage festivals. The Sabbath is a day (or a year) to "cease from labor" to refresh ourselves. We are to work for six days and rest on the 7th day. Slaves serve for six years but go free on the 7th year. One plants crops for 6 years but does not plant in the 7th year, so that the ground can rest. Each Shabbat, we come together to worship; to put aside the cares of the work week and to rest in God and with one another. The Sabbath is a time for both physical and spiritual refreshment. So many people have no particular time set aside for refreshment and relaxation. Their stress level continues to build to the breaking point. God, who knows our needs, gave us the Sabbath so that we might be renewed for another week of work. This is why **Mark 2:27** quotes Yeshua as saying, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." The principle of Sabbath rest applies today for all God's people both Jew and Gentile. Separating out one day to worship God and physically rest should be observed by all believers in Messiah. Even though **Col.2:16** says that we should not allow anyone to dictate on which day we should celebrate the Sabbath, we choose to uphold Jewish tradition and keep the Sabbath on the 7th day. However, we do not tell Christians that they are wrong for worshiping on Sunday. (We just occasionally & kindly remind them that the first followers of Messiah were Jewish.)

The three Pilgrimage Festivals were **Passover** (Unleavened Bread), **First Fruits** (Pentecost, Weeks), and **Sukkot** (Tabernacles, Booths). God expected all males to travel to collectively worship Him these three times a year. Parenthetically, we are told to avoid the Canaanite worship practice of boiling a kid (baby goat) in its mother's milk. Long after the Canaanites have disappeared as a group

of confederated tribes, many Orthodox Jews misunderstand the purpose of this mitzva and legalistically separate their meats from their milk (dairy) foods, using separate plates and utensils, separate refrigerators, and even separate kitchens to do so.

"I will be an enemy to your enemies..."

On their journey to the "promised land," God will send an angel (the Messiah) to protect them and be an enemy to their enemies, IF they will obey Him and do all that He says (vs.20 - 26). God also promised to keep them healthy, provide their food and water, and give them children and long lives.

God tells His people not to make any covenants with the Canaanites or worship their gods because He is going to drive them out of the land promised to His people....from the Red Sea to the sea of the Philistines, and from the wilderness to the River Euphrates. **Neither today should believers join themselves in any type of covenantal relationship with non-believers...."lest they make you sin against Me"** (vs.33). This includes both marriage and business relationships.

A Solemn Promise to God

God has given to His people His law and ordinances. In Chapter 24, the people are ready to accept this covenant with God. Moses repeats God's law, and the people respond, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" (vs.4) Then Moses formally writes down the provisions of the covenant they have accepted. He initiates sacrifices to seal the covenant in blood, which he sprinkles on the people, as a sign that they are bound to this covenant with God. Moses, Aaron and his sons, and seventy of the elders ate a covenant-sealing meal, having a visible manifestation of God in their midst. Then God told Moses to come up to the mountain, where God would give him a copy of the law on stone tablets. The shekinah glory, appearing like a consuming fire, rested on the mountain, and a cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day, God called Moses, and he went up the mountain into the cloud. He was gone for 40 days and nights.

Shabbat Shalom

